

# Trials of Uncle Sam's Consuls in South America

BY  
FREDERIC J.  
HASKIN

Guayaquil, Ecuador, Feb. 12.  
T WOULD seem that Guayaquil deserves to be nicknamed "the fever port." On account of the ravages of this disease, the United States government has had three different consular representatives here inside of twelve months. Nast died of fever. Sawyer gave up the place on account of being afraid of it, and now Dietrich, a Missouri editor, is holding the job. Along with his consular duties he is posting himself on the science of escaping fever, or of getting off easy if he has it.

## Sawyer's Quick Retreat.

The natives thought it was a good joke when Sawyer backed out, but there are other people who think it was the smartest thing he ever did in his life. Guayaquil is not inviting at its best, and Sawyer struck it at a particularly bad time. It was not long after the last big fire, and one peculiarity of these conflagrations is that an epidemic of fever always follows them. Every week for months there had been from forty to ninety deaths in the town. That fact was not comforting, to say the least. Jones, the vice consul, arranged the reception for the new consul. He greeted him warmly and took him at once to his quarters—the place where Nast had died. The deceased consul's empty hammock was swinging across the room, his coat hung upon the wall, and his slippers were in the corner.

Sawyer knew when he started that, figuratively speaking, he was to take a dead man's boots, but all this gruesome detail was too much for him. It is not to be wondered that a shiver ran up his spine. Jones, the vice consul, draws the regular consular salary when there is no one in office, and with an eye to business, he saw that Sawyer was weakening, and began to talk gloomily. The new incumbent was soon inquiring about a return ticket to New York. He held down the job just one-half day. A Guayaquil poet has written some verses, telling how cute Jones was in scaring Sawyer out. The latter may console himself with the thought that it is always best to make a good retreat rather than a bad stand.

## Uncle Sam's Consuls.

In connection with this incident it will be timely to say that the average American consul does not have an easy or desirable job. The service has had a peculiar history. In the time of Jefferson it was practically an honorary work. Well-to-do land holders, or lawyers of promise, went abroad in the service merely to acquire the experience and the travel, practically paying their way out of their own pockets. The business was not looked upon as a career. In those days American commercial interests were not important enough to warrant a trained consular corps, and the whole effort of our government was expended in organizing a diplomatic service. Our diplomats have always given a good account of themselves. When the time came for organizing a consular service it was created out of nothing. Men were sent to places on the theory that someone should be stationed there, but with no thought to the qualifications of the incumbents. It was all a matter of political patronage. Prior to 1895 no examination was necessary at all. As a result of this carelessness, the fitness of the men in our service, when compared to those of other nations,

Melon Peddle in Guayaquil.

suffers by comparison. A young man in the European consular service first serves as office clerk, then vice consul, and finally consul. Before he comes to the helm, he will have served on several stations, and know several languages, and will be familiar with all shipping laws and the books of the consulate. Our representatives are given thirty days' instruction in the state department at Washington, and dispatched to their posts without ever having looked inside of the books they are to handle. They have simply to get along by main strength and awkwardness.

## Contrary to Union Rule.

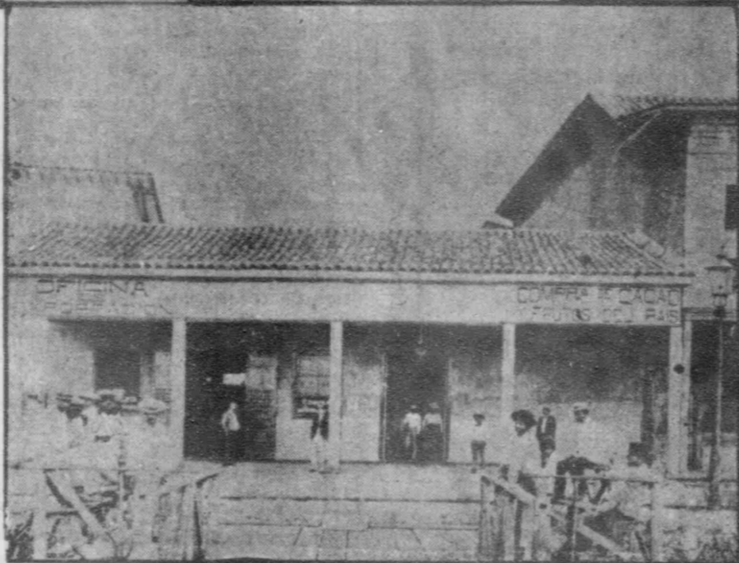
Some of our representatives are queer cases, to say the least. In one place in the West Indies, which I visited on a former trip, our consul is a colored preacher, who is doing missionary work in addition to his government duty. On certain evenings of each week he holds forth on the street corner in the role of apostle. If the labor union finds this out, there will doubtless be trouble, because it is a violation of its rules for a man to work on two jobs at once. The residents of the black republics and dependencies invariably resent our sending a colored man as consul. They claim that our government is not controlled by negroes and should not be represented by a man of color.

The consular service has great need of reform. No transportation expenses are furnished our representatives, either to or from their posts, or for the necessary trips they must make over their territory. One instance is on record where a consul with a large family was six months in paying the steamship company for his ticket. In many instances our consuls accept passes from the steamship companies, thus putting themselves under obligations to the owners of the ships they are sent out

H. R. Dietrich, Consul General at Guayaquil.



Street Corner in Guayaquil.



A Cocoa Commission House.

to watch. A consul has many trying experiences. If an American dies anywhere in his territory, leaving property, even if it is no more than a book and a 10-cent piece, he must become the curator of the estate. He must make many journeys to get drunken, disorderly American subjects out of jail. On these trips, mind you, the consul must pay his own expenses, and is often roundly cursed by his loyal constituents for being a little late.

## Reform Bill Should Pass.

The consular service is really a branch of our government located in a foreign land, and the whole system should be such that will reflect credit upon our great nation. Our foreign commercial interests have become so

important that men trained in the work of looking after them should be on duty everywhere. During the last few years a remarkable change has been going on for the better. Many capable, earnest men have been put in the field, and all the old ones were not incompetent by any means. Far from it. Our system of consular reports is already very creditable. The Lodge bill, now pending before congress, provides for almost all desirable points of reform necessary to put our service in the first rank. It is approved by the president, and many prominent members in both branches of congress, as well as all Americans who travel abroad, or have interests there. The most enthusiastic supporters of the measure are the consular representatives themselves, be-

cause they are ambitious for the standing and effectiveness of their organization. It is to be hoped that this bill will become a law.

Ecuador is a great cocoa producing country, and Guayaquil is the center of the industry. In the business district all talk centers upon the important staple of commerce. The buyers stand around in groups, whitening the beans with pocket knives and chewing them like as many children eating candy. Every one seems to be an authority on the subject. It is said that even the dogs and cats in the offices become acquainted with the various grades and learn to sleep upon a sack of cheap quality. This may be credited to the animals with powers of distinction beyond their intelligence, but the people of Guayaquil know cocoa as well as those of Washington and Oregon know lumber, or those of Pennsylvania understand coal. Ecuador produces 27 per cent of the world's supply of cocoa. The season for shipping the main crop extends from February to June, and during this time steamers leaving the port will carry from 10,000 to 15,000 bags, a single cargo often being worth as much as \$300,000. The sale of a season's crop will frequently amount to \$5,000,000 or \$6,000,000.

Cocoa thrives upon hot, moist soil, which is frequently inundated, and for this reason the most desirable plantations are located along the banks of the streams, or in low districts back of them. The center of the industry in Ecuador is along the Guayas river, extending for 150 miles inland from Guayaquil and as far as twenty miles back from the streams. The crop is transported to the river on mules and floated down to Guayaquil in boats. The cocoa beans are the product of trees about thirty feet high. They

grow in pods about the size of a coconut, there being about forty beans as large as a finger nut in each pod. Each tree only yields one pound of merchantable cocoa in a season, and it does not begin to bear until it is 5 years of age. But once it begins to bear it never wears out. At 20 years of age it yields a better quality of fruit than at first, and there are trees on plantations here which have been yielding for 100 years. The trees require very little care, the only attention needed being to remove the weeds and undergrowth from around them.

The laborers who work on the plantations are paid 40 cents a day, and they board themselves. Ecuador has eight millionaires, and it is a significant fact that all of them are owners of cocoa plantations, and that they are natives of the country. As yet the foreigner has not been able to outdo them in the business.

**Serpents and Scorpions.**  
The crop of snakes never falls short in Ecuador. The talk about them is almost as disturbing to the traveler's peace of mind as the yellow fever stories. The resident likes to tell yarns in the presence of the new arrival, just to see the "tenderfoot" wince. Aside from the yams, the unvarnished truth is enough to make the wayfarer uneasy. Not long ago a woman who was a guest at the best hotel in Guayaquil, was dozing in her hammock, when she was horrified to feel something crawling beneath her clothes. She screamed and sprang to her feet, but not in the direction of the door. It was a little house serpent, and as soon as she moved it buried its fangs in the flesh of her thigh. Her leg soon became terribly swollen, and although her life was saved she had a very narrow escape from death.

These little house serpents are very numerous in some parts of South America. In many of the coast towns, where there are adobe houses, they breed in the dirt roofs and are liable to be dropping into the rooms below at any time. A missionary told me that frequently he had killed as many as six or eight on his premises in a week's time. The little reptiles like the heat, and the flat roofs, where the sun beats hard, is a favorite place for them. When they are disturbed and happen to fall into the rooms below, they make for the warmest place they can find, and this is why they get into beds, or shoes, or clothing. In the barren districts the snakes are dull colored, like the surroundings, but in the forest regions they are as brilliantly colored as the vegetation around them.

The coral snake is one of the smallest members of the snake family. It seldom grows to be larger or thicker than a lead pencil. In addition to being small, it also has the distinction of being one of the most gorgeously colored snakes in existence, and one of the most deadly. A victim rarely recovers from its bite. It has eyelashes like a person. It makes the tourist shudder, in addition to all the above, to be told that one of its favorite retreats is between the coverings of beds. However, this species is not nearly so common as the dull colored serpent that lives in the earth of the adobe houses, and this is fortunate, because the latter is not so poisonous. Scorpions are another source of danger. They frequent the houses and their bite is likely to be fatal. One must be constantly on the lookout for these obnoxious prowlers.

One of the best snake stories in circulation is that told by A. L. M. Gotts-

chalk, the well known American consul. He found it difficult to keep a monkey on the premises because of the depredations of the big constrictors. The big reptiles have a failing for monkeys, and these agile little pets must keep a constant lookout for them. If Jocko drops into a dose he is likely to "wake up dead," as the saying goes.

On the occasion with which the story deals, a monkey's life was saved by the picture of the American eagle. The consular sign all over the world is a fine reproduction of the king of birds, in full color, and with outspread wings. A new sign had just been received and was sitting on a chair inside the room. A big box-constrictor creased the house monkey across the yard and through the open window. Jocko was making a good race, but a losing one. He was in the corner, quaking with fear, and very near to death's door, when his pursuer confronted the picture of the eagle, in its menacing attitude. A snake fears eagles even more than it craves monkeys, and that particular reptile turned tail and went out of the window as quickly as if the devil was after it. That monkey was a smart monkey, and now whenever it wants to take a nap it goes to roost over the picture of the eagle.

## GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE.

(Galveston News.)

"The Chicago man who recently applied for a divorce and gave as one of the grounds, at least, the fact that he could not stand the jokes of his wife's female friends," directs attention again to some of the old facts in connection with the American divorce system," remarked a popular young lawyer yesterday; "and really some of the reasons assigned as ground for divorce are odd in the extreme."

"Persons who are engaged in fighting the 'divorce evil,' as they call it, could spend the time more profitably than by inquiring into the method in which the legal grounds for divorce have been interpreted by the courts of the country. I was looking over a report the other night, cited by an English writer, and was much amused at some of the allegations set forth in divorce petitions. Really it is a mixture of the comic and tragic. A husband accused his wife's sister of theft, and the injury to the wife's feelings is made ground for divorce. 'During our whole married life,' says another, 'my husband has never once offered to take me out riding. This has been a source of great mental suffering and injury.' The husband whose wife complained in another petition that he did not wash himself, 'thereby inflicting on plaintiff great mental anguish,' must have been a disciple of the Chicago physician who recently declared against the bath."

"The complaint in another petition, filed by the wife, was that the husband 'quoted verses from the New Testament about wives obeying husbands. He has even threatened to mash the plaintiff, and has drawn back his hand to do it.' Still another wife, according to the author quoted, alleged in her petition that her husband did not come home till 10 o'clock at night, 'and when he does come home he keeps plaintiff awake talking.' It is also charged that 'he keeps a saloon, which sorely grieves mind of plaintiff.' These are only a few of the cases which might be mentioned to show the liberal manner in which the courts of the country deal with the question of 'mental anguish' or 'mental cruelty.'"

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